

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

The specification has been amended to correct several minor inadvertent errors. In paragraphs [0027] and [0034], typographical and grammatical errors have been corrected, while in paragraph [0033] reference numeral "29" pertaining to the remote control unit has been deleted to avoid redundancy with respect to the same reference numeral used to identify the intermediate pulley. No new matter has been introduced.

Also, the Abstract of the Disclosure has been replaced with a new Abstract of the Disclosure that addresses the issues raised on page two of the Official Action. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection to the Abstract of the Disclosure is respectfully requested.

Claim 1 has been amended to address the issues raised in paragraphs "9" and "10" on page three of the Official Action. Also, Claim 2 has been amended for purposes of consistency in the claim wording. These changes do not narrow the claim scope as they merely recite in different terms that which was originally set forth. In light of the changes, withdrawal of the claim rejection based on the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112 is respectfully requested.

The wording in Claim 2 has also been amended to correct a typographical error concerning the second lock state detecting means which detects restraint of the second door. It is believed that this Amendment addresses the issue raised in paragraph "6" at the top of page three of the Official Action. Accordingly, withdrawal

of the claim rejection based on the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112 is respectfully requested.

By way of this Amendment, new Claims 5-18 are presented for consideration. Thus, the claims currently pending in this application are Claims 1-18, with Claims 1 and 10 being the only independent claims.

Independent Claim 1 is directed to a vehicle door controlling apparatus comprising a connection locking means provided between a first door and a second door for locking the first and second doors by connecting them to one another. Door-locking means for restraining opening and closing of the second door relative to the vehicle body, release means for unlocking the connection locking means or the door locking means, and operating means which requests opening of the second door, a first lock state detecting means for detecting the state of the connection locking means, and a controlling means for controlling the connection locking means and the release means. Upon detecting a request for opening the second door using the operating means, the controlling means operates the release means, releases a locked condition of the connection of the connection locking means and releases a locked condition of the door-locking means, and electrically drives the second door based on a signal from the first lock state detecting means.

The Official Action sets forth a rejection of original Claims 1-4 based on the disclosure contained in U.S. Application Publication No. 2002/0027375 to *Wattebled*. That rejection is respectfully traversed for at least the following reasons.

Wattebled discloses a vehicle provided with a swinging door PB, a sliding door PC, and a first lock PS connecting the swinging door PB to the sliding door PC. As illustrated in Fig. 2, the lock PS comprises a slider CO which is movable along an

axis AX. The slider CO is connected to a pair of latch bolts P1, P2 which are adapted to rotate about a common axis AR. The two latch bolts P1, P2 form a gripper PI which is adapted to trap or release a striker GA mounted on the sliding door PC. The slider CO is capable of moving between the deployed position shown in Figs. 3 and 5 in which the gripper PI is open to release or receive the striker GA and the retracted position illustrated in Fig. 4 in which the gripper PI is closed to trap the striker GA. As discussed near the bottom of column 3 and the top of column 4 of *Wattebled*, the lock PS is specifically configured so that the striker GA engages various portions of the slider or latch bolts P1, P2, while a chamfer CH at the end of the slider engages a pawl CL, so that the swinging door and the sliding door can be opened in the desired manner.

The Official Action recognizes that *Wattebled* does not disclose the method by which the sliding door PC is driven and the method by which the sliding door PC is unlocked. The Official Action takes Official Notice that it would have been obvious to use a program to release the lock PS between the sliding door PC and the swinging door PB and to release the lock TS that locks the sliding door PC to allow the sliding door to be remotely opened. However, no basis exists for this observation.

Certainly, *Wattebled* does not envision remotely controlling the sliding door PC and is not at all concerned with such aspect of the door arrangement. Instead, *Wattebled* is specifically concerned with configuring the lock PS that locks the two doors PC, PB to one another so that the sliding door and the swinging door can be opened and closed as desired. More specifically, the focus of the disclosure in *Wattebled* is to configure the lock PS so that when the doors PC, PB are opened or closed, the

striker GA acts on portions of the lock PS in a way which releases or engages the striker GA.

In addition, even if one were somehow motivated to modify the arrangement described in *Wattebled* for purposes or providing remote control as suggested in the Official Action, there is disclosure that would have directed one to provide the claimed combination of features recited in Claim 1. For example, implementing remote control operation in connection with the door arrangement described in *Wattebled* would not necessarily lead one to include lock state detecting means which detects the state of the first lock PS, together with a release means for unlocking the first lock PS or the third lock TS, and a controlling means which controls the first lock PS and the third lock TS such that when a request for opening the door PS is detected, the controlling means operates the release means, releases a locked condition of the first lock PS and releases a locked condition of the third lock TS, and electrically drives the sliding door PS based on a signal from the lock state detecting means. It is only through impermissible resort to applicants' own disclosure that one would have been motivated to do that which is defined in Claim 1 as the invention. Accordingly, withdrawal of the claim rejection based on the disclosure in *Wattebled* is respectfully requested.

New independent Claim 10 is allowable for at least the reasons discussed above. In addition, new Claim 10 recites that the connection locking means comprises a rotatably mounted latch that is rotatable into an inner space of a striker to achieve an engaged condition between the latch and the striker. This is not the case with the lock PS described in *Wattebled*. Indeed, *Wattebled* envisions a pair of latch bolts P1, P2 that encircle the striker GA for purposes of locking the sliding door

PC and the swinging door PB. *Wattebled* does not disclose how one would go about modifying the particular arrangement of the latch bolts P1, P2 and the slider so that CO so as to include a rotatably mounted latch that is rotatable into an inner space of a striker to achieve an engaged condition between the latch and the striker as recited in Claim 10, particularly considering the specific operational characteristics described in *Wattebled* for achieving the intended operation of the first lock PS. Thus, Claim 10 is further distinguishable over the disclosure in *Wattebled*.

The new dependent claims define additional distinguishing characteristics associated with the claimed vehicle door controlling apparatus. For example, Claims 5 and 14 recite that the latch is freely rotatable in a widthwise direction of the vehicle, while Claims 6 and 15 recite that the controlling means which electrically drives the second door is positioned inside the second door and comprises a sliding door driving unit. New Claims 7, 8, 16 and 17 define additional features associated with the sliding door driving unit, while new Claims 9 and 18 define additional features associated with the second lock state detecting means. *Wattebled* lacks disclosure of various features recited in these new claims.

Early and favorable action with respect to this application is respectfully requested.


Should any questions arise in connection with this application or should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference with the undersigned would be helpful

in resolving any remaining issues pertaining to this application the undersigned respectfully requests that he be contacted at the number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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